A Heritage Strategy for Nova Scotia

You are invited to contribute

You are invited to share your ideas about the future of heritage in Nova Scotia. Your input will help to create recommendations for an overall heritage strategy for our province. This heritage strategy will set the stage for the important decisions, directions, and investments for the future.

Here's how you can get involved:

Talk or write to us by December 15, 2005

In person

Attend one of our upcoming community meetings. You will be given the chance to speak, if you wish.

By phone

Call our office, toll-free. We will listen to your comments and take note of your opinions and concerns.

Ph. (902) 424-8650 or toll-free 1 (866) 858-5850

By mail or fax

Write to us. You can either respond to one or more of the questions listed below or just set down your opinion in letter style.

Fax (902) 424-0580

Voluntary Planning
Suite 600, Joseph Howe Building
1690 Hollis Street, Halifax
Nova Scotia, B3J 3J9

Online

Our questions are available on our website as a web form. You can fill in your responses on screen and send them over the Internet.

www.gov.ns.ca/vp

Raise the issue of heritage in your community

The more people we get involved in this discussion, the more valid will be our recommendations to government. Here are some ways you can help raise the issue:

Call-in radio

Raise the issue of heritage or some aspect that interests you on call-in radio programs.

Local newspapers

Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.

Discussions with family and friends

Share our materials with the people you know. Encourage them to get involved.

Defining Heritage

1 What does "heritage" mean to you?

2 What aspect of Nova Scotian heritage do you value the most and why?

3 Do you believe there is an appropriate balance placed on—or support provided for—the heritage of all cultures in Nova Scotia? If not, what should be done?

Role and Purpose of Heritage

4 Do you believe heritage plays an important role and purpose in our society? If so, what role or purpose do you feel is most valuable?

5 Do we invest enough money for heritage? If not, how should an increase in investment be financed?

6 Are we doing enough to educate our youth about heritage and to foster their interest in heritage? If not, what more can be done by our schools? By others?

Heritage—A Shared Responsibility

7 What more can governments do to better care for our heritage?

8 What more can the business sector do to better care for our heritage?

9 What more can volunteers or community organizations do to better care for our heritage?

Heritage Issues

10 What's your vision for the future of heritage in Nova Scotia?

11 Do you know of good heritage practices or strategies used in other jurisdictions?

12 What are the risks, challenges, or barriers facing heritage in Nova Scotia? In your community? In your organization?

13 What are the opportunities or actions that we in Nova Scotia could act on to strengthen heritage in our province? In your community? In your organization?

14 What should be the priorities for the next 10 years to advance the heritage sector in Nova Scotia?

15 How will we know that Nova Scotia's heritage strategy has been successful?

16 Do you have any other comments?

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Background

The Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage and the Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage have asked Voluntary Planning to recommend a strategy for the future of heritage. They want us to find out what the citizens of Nova Scotia want. We do our work through a volunteer task force, drawn from across the province. Our recommendations will be based on an extensive public consultation process.

To formulate the heritage recommendations, Voluntary Planning has appointed a Heritage Strategy Task Force of 11 volunteer citizens from across Nova Scotia. We, the 11 citizens that form the task force, are a diverse group with an excellent mix of experience and knowledge. We each have special knowledge or interest in some aspect of heritage. You can read about us on the Voluntary Planning website. We will be going out to communities throughout the province to hear from people like you. We are looking forward to listening to you, and to discussing your concerns and your ideas.

We, the task force members, will do our work at arm's length to government and to the heritage community. This means we will make up our own minds, based on what we hear. We are starting with no preconceived notions of what the plan could contain. We will let the issues and ideas raised by Nova Scotians shape our recommendations for heritage priorities and policies to government.

We encourage everyone with an interest in heritage and all those who might hear about these consultations to participate. You do not need specialized heritage experience to make a valuable contribution. We need to hear what Nova Scotians value most about their heritage. And we need this to be an inclusive exercise. We need to hear what is most important or valued from one part of our province to another, and from one culture to another.

Defining Heritage

As we open this discussion, we are not ready to define heritage. We first want to hear from the people of Nova Scotia. Heritage means many things to many people. What does heritage mean to you? Here are some of the things others include in heritage:

tangible human or cultural heritage	historic buildings, museums, libraries, structures, cemeteries, burial sites, sacred places, monuments, archaeology, artifacts, archives
intangible aspects of our past	genealogy, history, language, unique know-how, customs, traditions, beliefs, aspirations, identity, values, folklore, traditional knowledge
our province's natural heritage	wilderness areas set aside and protected as representative examples of Nova Scotia's natural landscapes, our native biological diversity, and outstanding natural features

A significant number of Nova Scotians may view heritage primarily through an ethnic lens. The Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia can trace their roots in this region back some 11,000 years coinciding with the recession of the last ice age. People of French, English, Scottish, or African ancestory might be inclined to identify with events occuring since the voyages of explorers or the first immigrants to Nova Scotia beginning in the 1500s. And recent immigrants of other ethnic cultures may only have decades of history associated with their new home. No matter what the date of first arrival, cultural heritage for many extends well beyond the borders of Nova Scotia.

What do you think?

1. What does "heritage" mean to you?
2. What aspect of Nova Scotian heritage do you value the most and why?
3. Do you believe there is an appropriate balance placed on—or support provided for—the heritage of all cultures in Nova Scotia? If not, what should be done?

Role and Purpose of Heritage

Heritage plays a host of vital roles in society. It helps new generations gain a sense of place and pride in their community and their country. Heritage entertains, educates, and attracts both tourists and immigrants alike. Many rural areas depend on heritage to attract and retain much-needed professionals who otherwise would opt to locate with their families in larger centers.

Heritage reflects the character and identity of entire populations, fueling confidence in what can be achieved. We look to the past to understand our present and to plan our future. Heritage satisfies our craving to memorialize our accomplishments and commemorate our heroes. It marks the major events of our time and also stimulates economic growth. Heritage helps to realize our deepest desires to be remembered; to leave our mark on the world in the form of a legacy so future generations can see that we were here and that we mattered.

Of course these are only a few of the roles and purposes attributed to heritage. We would love to hear what you think.

4 Do you believe heritage plays an important role and purpose in our society? If so, what role or purpose do you feel is most valuable?

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Heritage—A Shared Responsibility

Caring for our heritage involves volunteers, community organizations, and every possible level of government in one way or another. The complex interrelationships among the many participants in heritage underline the need for a provincial heritage strategy that can serve as a way to illustrate and communicate a plan for the future for all involved. Participants in heritage include

Community and Private Sector

Nova Scotians are consumers of heritage, employees of heritage operations, and dedicated volunteers. Corporations large and small participate directly in the heritage sector or contribute in a variety of other ways. The Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage and the Council of Nova Scotia Archives are examples of umbrella organizations representing a large number of constituent organizations. Community groups manage heritage operations, and other associations represent the cultural diversity of our province.

Municipal Government

Municipal governments across the province play an important heritage role. They are responsible for land-use planning, zoning, and bylaws. The time, expertise, and resources dedicated by one municipality or another may vary substantially.

First Nations Government

First Nations governments have a government-to-government relationship with Canada and the provinces. The Mi'kmaq Nation of Nova Scotia has governing councils across Nova Scotia that make decisions for their communities.

Provincial Government

The Province of Nova Scotia directs heritage policy and programs through its Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. The department operates 27 provincial museums and the public archives of Nova Scotia. It maintains a vast collection of artifacts, specimens, and archival records. It is responsible for legislation that governs

- museums
- public archives
- special places
- protection of cemeteries
- heritage properties

Federal Government

The Government of Canada participates in heritage mainly through the Department of Canadian Heritage, through Parks Canada, and through Library and Archives Canada. The Department of Canadian Heritage tries to create a more cohesive and creative Canada. It promotes the creation, distribution, and preservation of diverse Canadian cultural works that reflect our past and express our Canadian values and aspirations. An important goal of the department is to strengthen connections among Canadians and deepen understanding across diverse communities. It helps people to appreciate their shared responsibility as citizens of Canada and encourages people to get involved in their communities.

Parks Canada works to protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage. It serves as guardian of the national parks, the national historic sites, and the national marine conservation areas of Canada.

Library and Archives Canada is responsible for the acquisition, preservation, and access to documentary heritage.

International Bodies

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) encourages countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage. It designates and encourages the responsible jurisdictions to set up management plans for their World Heritage Sites.

As you can see from this sampling of the participants and the many ways they contribute to the heritage sector in our society, heritage is very much a shared responsibility. How has this been working, in your opinion? What new ideas can you offer?

7 What more can governments do to better care for our heritage?

8 What more can the business sector do to better care for our heritage?

9 What more can volunteers or community organizations do to better care for our heritage?

Heritage Issues

To make sure that Nova Scotia's heritage strategy reflects what Nova Scotians value most and to make sure that all the issues are brought forward, we are conducting an extensive consultation.

Strategies, by their nature, tackle the big directional issues and the problems that may have festered for many years. Strategic reviews shine the light on or even discover huge opportunities that we might be overlooking. Strategic plans bring focus to barriers that limit success. They highlight risks that, if left unaltered, will create bigger problems down the road.

As we go forward in our discussions with citizens, stakeholders, and experts, we remind everyone to help us focus on solutions. We want to hear how you might address the problem, capitalize on the opportunity, reduce the risk, or otherwise prepare for an ever-changing future.

We start this consultation without presuming to know the answers. Already, the following are emerging as issues:

- volunteer burnout
- viability of museums
- relevance of museums to communities
- abandoned cemeteries
- unmarked or unprotected burial grounds and sacred places
- founding languages at risk
- archives undervalued and under appreciated
- reduced funding in the face of ever increasing operating costs
- highly qualified but poorly paid and overworked staff
- training
- youth participation
- deferred building maintenance
- ability to protect our natural heritage

With these issues in mind—or with new issues you raise—think about the following:

10 What's your vision for the future of heritage in Nova Scotia?

11 Do you know of good heritage practices or strategies used in other jurisdictions?

12 What are the risks, challenges or barriers facing heritage in Nova Scotia? In your community? In your organization?

13 What are the opportunities or actions that we in Nova Scotia could act on to strengthen heritage in our province? In your community? In your organization?

14 What should be the priorities for the next ten years to advance the heritage sector in Nova Scotia?

15 How will we know Nova Scotia's heritage strategy has been successful?

16 Do you have any other comments?

Next Steps

Please, enter into the discussion. Join us at a community meeting near you. Write to us by regular mail, by e-mail, or by fax. Go online to our website and use the form provided to enter your comments. Or, if you prefer, phone Voluntary Planning by using the toll-free line. Our success depends upon Nova Scotians like you taking the time to share their thoughts and feelings. We encourage you to participate in whatever way you feel most comfortable.

Website: www.gov.ns.ca/vp

Phone: (902) 424-8650 or toll-free 1 (866) 858-5850

Fax: (902) 424-0850

E-mail: volplan@gov.ns.ca

Address: Suite 600, Joseph Howe Building
1690 Hollis Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3J9

We are accepting submissions until **December 15, 2005**.

After that we will take some time to read your submissions and to ponder what we have heard. We will put together a set of recommendations that try to reflect the wide range of opinions we have gathered. Before the end of March 2006 we will publish these proposed recommendations in an interim report.

Then once more we will ask for your opinion. You will be given the chance to tell us how well we've been able to respond to what you have told us. We will consider the feedback we get and decide whether our recommendations need any changes. Only then will we submit our recommendations to government in the form of a final report. Our final report will also be published for all to see.